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[Lindfield, Peter](#) (2020) *Vetusta Monumenta*; Volume 2, Plate 12: The Savoy Hospital in the Strand. Society of Antiquaries of London.

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Publisher: Society of Antiquaries of London

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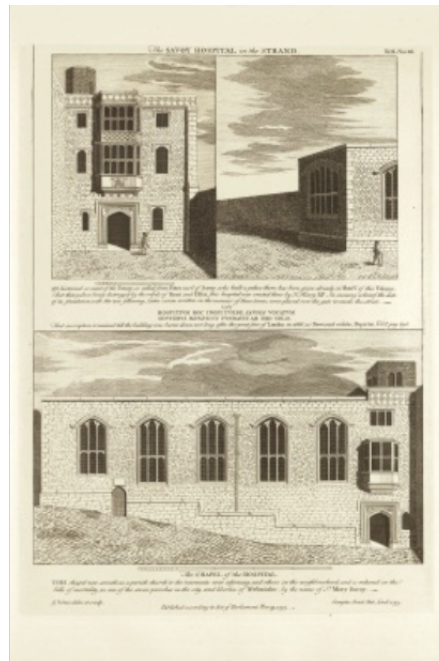
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Plate 2.12: Savoy Hospital

- Plate

Plate:



(http://scalar.missouri.edu/~dzi/vm2012/dzc_output.dzi) Engraved by George Vertue (1684–1756) in 1753 after his own drawings, originally made in 1736 (Alexander 2008, 383). The first plate in this series to be engraved by Vertue, a picturesque view of the Savoy Hospital from across the river Thames, was exhibited to the Society of Antiquaries in November of 1749 and was published as Plate 2.5 (<https://scalar.missouri.edu/vm/vol2plate5-view-of-savoy>) in 1750 (SAL Minutes VI.9). The drawings for this plate were exhibited to the Society three years later, on 24 May 1753. The Society’s minutes record that “Mr. Vertue shewed three Drawings of Sundry Buildings of the Savoy, and Mr. Gale Proposed and was Seconded: That Mr. Vertue should Engrave them at the Expence of the Society” (SAL Minutes VII.63). The motion passed at the next meeting, and Plate 2.12 was published on 29 November 1753, with the final engraving incorporating three drawings of the prison and chapel buildings of the Savoy. The last drawing from this series to be published in *Vetusta Monumenta* was a ground plan of the complex, depicted in Plate 2.14 (<https://scalar.missouri.edu/vm/vol2plate14-plan-of-the-savoy>) (1754).

- Object

Object:

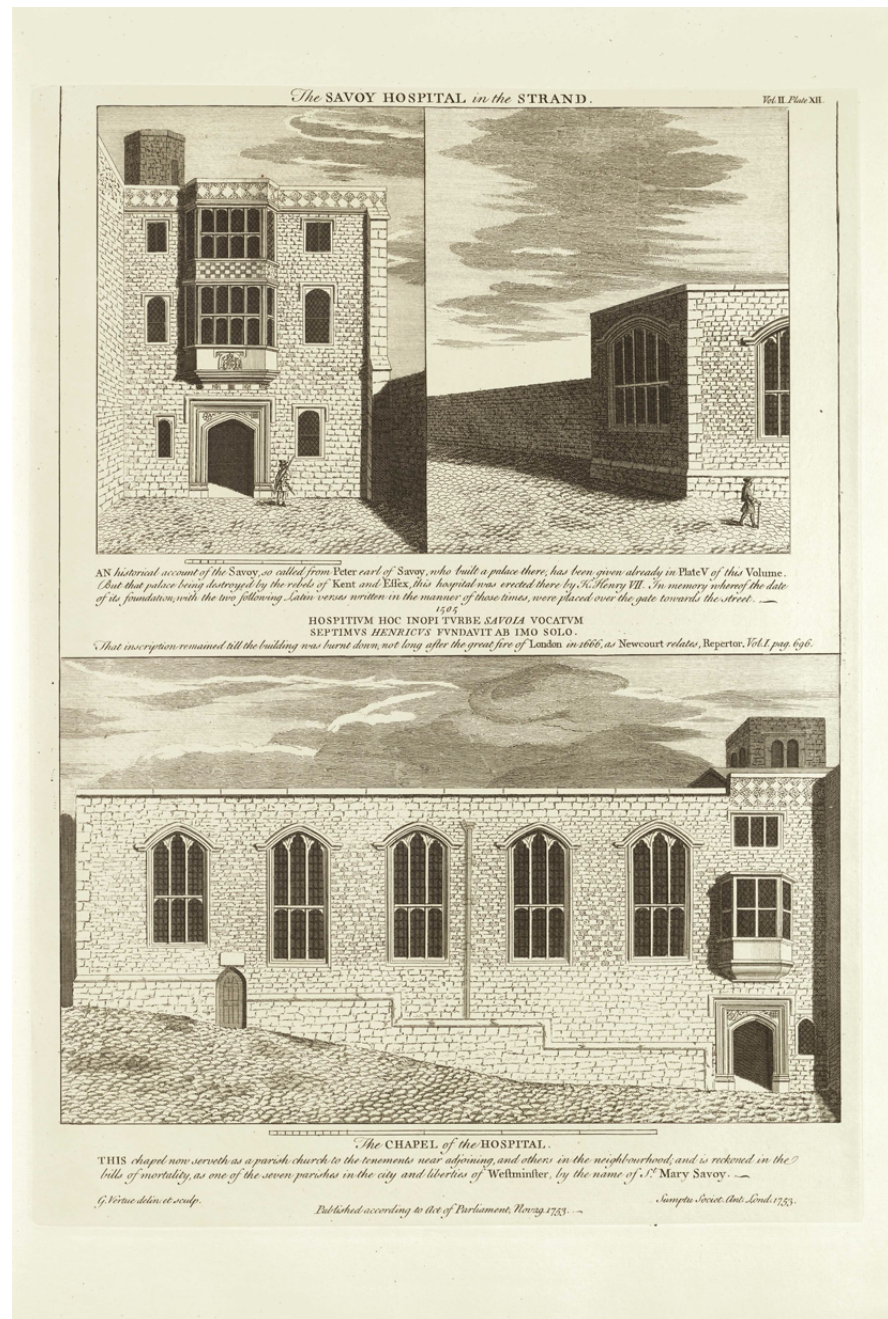


Plate 2.12 of Vetusta Monumenta [to be completed]

(<https://scalar.missouri.edu/vm/media/vm2-12.jpg>) The plate delineates a number of buildings forming the Savoy Hospital dedicated in 1509 to St. John the Baptist and rebuilt in the very early sixteenth century following orders from Henry VII. By 1736, these buildings had taken on numerous other functions, including barracks, a prison, churches, private dwellings, a warehouse, and the King's printing press. The vast majority of these buildings were destroyed by fire in 1776; any remaining fragments were swept away after 1816 to make way for the approach to Waterloo Bridge that crosses the Thames and links Victoria Embankment with the South Bank.

The three scenes delineated on this plate are the entrance to the Prison and also one of the chapels, which, incidentally, is the only surviving part of the Hospital and is now known as the Queen's Chapel of the Savoy.

- Transcription

Transcription:

Plate Title

The SAVOY HOSPITAL in the STRAND.

Upper images

An historical account of the Savoy, so called from Peter earl of Savoy, who built a palace there, has been given already in Plate V of this Volume. But that palace being destroyed by the rebels of Kent and Essex, this hospital was erected there by K. Henry VII. In memory whereof the date of its foundation, with the two following Latin verses written in the manner of those times, were placed over the gate towards the street.—

1505

HOSPITIVM HOC INOPI TVRBE SAVOIA VOCATVM

SEPTIMVS HENRICVS FVNDavit AB IMO SOLO.

That inscription remained till the building was burnt down, not long after the great fire of London in 1666, as Newcourt relates, Repertor. Vol.I. pag. 696.

Lower image

The CHAPEL of the HOSPITAL.

THIS chapel now serveth as a parish church to the tenements near adjoining, and others in the neighbourhood; and is reckoned in the bills of mortality, as one of the seven parishes in the city and liberties of Westminster, by the name of St. Mary Savoy.—

G. Vertue delin. et sculp. Published according to Act of Parliament, Nov. 29 1753.— Sumptu Societ. Ant. Lond. 1753.

- Translation

Translation:

Henry VII to his merit and honour
This hospital founded, poor people to succor

G[eorge] Vertue, draftsman and engraver. Published by the Society of Antiquaries of London.

- Commentary

Commentary by Peter N. Lindfield: Much like Vertue's earlier plate delineating the Savoy in perspective from across the river Thames (Plate 2.5 (<https://scalar.missouri.edu/vm/vol2plate5-view-of-savoy>)), this plate also records parts of the former Savoy Hospital in a convincingly three-dimensional manner. Using strong contrasts between highlights and shadow—chiaroscuro—the buildings' three dimensions are represented in the manner of topographical artists. Vertue, however, fails to render some of the scenes in an entirely convincing manner; for example, the cobbles included in each of the three scenes do not get smaller the further away they are from the picture plane, and the exact form of the cobbled lane in front of the chapel in the lower image is confused. A comparative and more successful example of realistically diminishing detail can be found in the depiction of waves in Canaletto's paintings. For instance, in his painting *A Regatta on the Grand Canal* (<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/canaletto-a-regatta-on-the-grand-canal>) (c. 1740), now in the collection of the National Gallery in London, the waves in the Grand Canal are smaller the further away they are from the picture plane.

A further addition to this plate's confusing appearance is the foreshortened wall in the upper left scene, as it does not render the brick courses following strict one-point-perspective; the result is clumsy. Such clumsiness isn't unusual in Vertue's work: Plate 2.10

(<https://scalar.missouri.edu/vm/vol2plate10-doncaster-cross>) of Doncaster Cross doesn't represent the circular and polygonal base of the cross in a convincing manner; by contrast, Plate 2.8

(<https://scalar.missouri.edu/vm/vol2plate8-gloucester-cross>) of Gloucester Cross, also by Vertue, nevertheless manages to successfully depict the recession of buildings and microarchitectural ornament according to one-point-perspective.

The plate is laid out in two separate parts: the upper engraving represents two

unidentified buildings; the lower, single scene is clearly identified as the chapel. This is but one of a number of chapels among the former hospital's buildings in the eighteenth century. By the 1730s, the Savoy Hospital's buildings had taken on many other functions, including barracks, a prison, churches, private dwellings, a warehouse, and the King's printing press. These are detailed in the third of Vertue's engravings in this set, a plan view of the site (Plate 2.14 (<https://scalar.missouri.edu/vm/vol2plate14-plan-of-the-savoy>)).

Comparing the upper-left image on this plate from *Vetusta Monumenta* with other engravings made of the Savoy in the eighteenth century reveals that the entranceway, protected by a guard, is that of the Prison established within the precinct of the former Savoy Hospital. A comparison between Vertue's engraving and that of the entrance to the Prison included in John Thomas Smith's 1793 volume, *Antiquities of London and Environs* (https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1861-1109-497), reveals a number of similarities. In this version, published fifty years after Vertue's engraving of the prison's entrance, the general form of the portal with its Tudor-arch head flanked by heraldic insignia, the double-decker oriel window above it with a chequered patterning between floors, the number and position of windows flanking the oriel, and, also, the diagonally-set chequerboard pattern on the façade parapet, all match Vertue's depiction. Smith's plate, however, demonstrates how the entrance façade and the surrounding buildings were significantly altered over time with a lean-to added on the right, the general boarding up of windows, and the inclusion of a doorway and oriel window on the left-hand wall. These similarities and differences attest not only to the accuracy of Vertue's 1753 plate, but also to how the Savoy buildings changed over time. A significant historical event impacting the structure was the devastating fire of 1776. The fire saw large amounts of the complex reduced to rubble, as illustrated in a number of J.M.W. Turner's watercolors of the site, such as *The Ruins of the Savoy Palace* (<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-girtin-the-ruins-of-the-savoy-palace-d36498>) and *The Interior of the Ruins of the Savoy Chapel* (<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-girtin-london-the-interior-of-the-ruins-of-the-savoy-chapel-d36526>) (both c. 1796), now in the Tate Britain, London.

The scene to the top right of Vertue's plate is another view of the chapel, the only surviving part of the former hospital, which is now known as the Queen's

Chapel of the Savoy. In this instance, the five-light window on the shaded façade is the internal backdrop to the chapel's altar and is the "east" window—despite it actually facing NNW. The Chapel's side windows included in Vertue's plate match those seen in the structure as it stands today (<https://londonchurchbuildings.com/2013/01/31/savoy-chapel/>); however, the "east" window is now of a Perpendicular Gothic form.

Notably, two of the scenes on this plate include figures that ground the architecture in modern, Georgian life, which is something that Vertue included in his other plates for *Vetusta Monumenta* and elsewhere, as did William Stukeley. Another notable aspect is the Tudor heraldry around and over the entrance to the Prison. These heraldic badges include the portcullis, adopted by Henry VII, the rose (presumably the Tudor rose), and the royal coat of arms. Notably, the coat of arms is depicted in a mirrored state and hence incorrect: the greyhound should be on the right (dexter) and dragon on the left (sinister) and the shield should be 1 and 4 France (modern), 2 and 3 England, or, in the technical language of heraldry, known as blazon: *Quarterly, first and fourth azure, three fleurs-de-lis or, and second and third gules three Lions passant gardant in pale ir armed and langued azure* (Hasler 1980). Vertue's plate, instead, renders the shield quarterly: 1 and 4 England, 2 and 3 France (modern) with the supporters also transposed: the greyhound is on the left (sinister) and the dragon on the right (dexter). The correct arrangement can be seen on the interior of King's College Chapel (<https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/3437048>), Cambridge. This appears to be a simple mistake rather than an intentional error.

Further detail of the history of the Savoy and the complex of buildings as a whole may be found in the commentary to Plate 2.5 (<https://scalar.missouri.edu/vm/vol2plate5-view-of-savoy>), *A View of the Savoy from the River Thames*.

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Updated 14/07/2020 | Metadata (<https://scalar.missouri.edu/vm/vol2plate12-savoy-hospital.meta>)



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